

Letter to the community regarding COVID-19

Please go out in the fresh air, take a step back, close your eyes and take a deep breath!

Hard to imagine that two months ago, we never knew that COVID-19 existed. Now when people say virus, they are referring to COVID-19 (also known as SARS-CoV-2)

Please be careful to keep yourself and your loved ones from becoming infected. We do know how to do that – basic hygiene like washing our hands, covering your cough, not touching our face and staying away from others while you are sick. In addition, we have included a measure called “social distancing”- this means staying at least 6 feet away from someone else if you do not have any protective equipment on, closing large gatherings, encouraging telework from home and school closures.

This change in our lives disrupts our routines, activities and our ability to freely move and do what we want to do. The responsibility is OURS, as a community, to help get rid of this virus. The virus needs us to pass it around because it cannot do that by itself. If every person that has the virus or has been exposed, stays away from others, there is no one to infect and the virus does not survive. So long as everyone follows the guidelines and we do not allow the virus to infect other people, this disruption is time-limited.

The virus is spread by droplets created when someone coughs or sneezes and droplets land on another person. Those droplets can carry viruses that can land on surfaces and get on people’s hands as they touch. Exactly how long the virus stays alive on a surface has not been determined. Several disinfectants are known to clean and kill the virus. The CDC offers a list at:

<https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf>

Most people with COVID-19 will have mild symptoms of fever over 100.4°F, and a dry cough. Persons with more severe disease may have shortness of breath and difficulty breathing.

I know folks are worried and want testing to be done. Do you really need it? In order to do a test, you need to see a health care provider, they need to be adequately protected because they need to see other patients. The testing procedure uses up our supply of protective equipment like masks, gowns and gloves that we need to use to care for someone that actually has COVID 19. Those supplies are already limited today. Our medical system is already overwhelmed with taking care of sick people every day.

A test is something that we recommend if there is going to be a change in course of action clinically (are we going to do or recommend anything different for you) or is there a significant public health action that needs to be done (putting a facility in lockdown or recommend mass quarantine or isolation. When folks are exhibiting symptoms, we ask you to self-isolate (stay away from others so you do not infect them) until symptoms resolve. A test does not protect you from getting infected and what if you are exposed again? – SO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM EXPOSURE. That is why we have imposed the social distancing measures.

Mass gatherings or large events are a concern because of the movement of people, specially if it is in a tight space. The ability of individuals to protect themselves in a mass gathering is limited. From a public health standpoint, even smaller gatherings are a concern if it is open to the public and there is not way to identify who may be exposed. If there is a confirmed case, we want to be able to identify and notify all those who may have been exposed and provide guidance. In all situations, we ask everyone to

monitor themselves for symptoms of fever or cough and exclude themselves from participation if they are ill. This way we can protect each other.

We need you to help. We need you to stay home when you are sick, wash your hands and maintain social distancing. We need you to help conserve the resources that our health care providers need to take care of us properly if we need medical care. We need you to follow public health guidance and when there is none, we need you to use common sense. It is not possible to put out guidance for everything that you commonly do.

We have been working on a pandemic preparedness plan for years. This pandemic is testing and challenging us. Our response community and medical community have all ramped up to respond the best they can. Thank you to our public servants who have been doing their best to handle this situation to have the best outcome. They have been at it for weeks and are doing their best.

Please take care of yourself and your loved ones. It is a tough and scary time and disruption is difficult. With your help we can get through this together.

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